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## Viewing cable 10OTTAWA1, CANADA; TOP FIVE POLICY PRIORITIES IN 2010

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### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#10OTTAWA1**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">10OTTAWA1</a>	<a href="#">2010-01-04 15:32</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL//NOFORN</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Ottawa</a>

Appears in these articles:

<http://aptn.ca/pages/news/2011/05/09/canada-was-hoping-to-train-afghan-security-forces-in-russia-u-s-diplomatic-cables/>

```
VZCZCXRO0265
OO RUEHSL
DE RUEHOT #0001/01 0041532
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O R 041532Z JAN 10
FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0221
INFO ALL CANADIAN POSTS COLLECTIVE
NATO EU COLLECTIVE
```

```
id: 242400
date: 1/4/2010 15:32
refid: 10OTTAWA1
origin: Embassy Ottawa
classification: CONFIDENTIAL//NOFORN
destination: 08OTTAWA1574
header:
VZCZCXRO0265
OO RUEHSL
DE RUEHOT #0001/01 0041532
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O R 041532Z JAN 10
FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0221
INFO ALL CANADIAN POSTS COLLECTIVE
NATO EU COLLECTIVE
```

----- header ends -----

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 OTTAWA 000001

NOFORN

SIPDIS

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PASS TO AMCONSUL QUEBEC

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/01/04

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SUBJECT: CANADA; TOP FIVE POLICY PRIORITIES IN 2010

REF: 08 OTTAWA 1574

CLASSIFIED BY: Terry A. Breese, DCM, Ottawa, DCM; REASON: 1.4(D)

[¶1.](#) (C/NF) Summary. PM Harper's top goal for 2010 is remaining in power, preferably without an election that the public does not want but, if need be, to force the weak opposition parties to bring on another election and bear the political consequences. The Conservatives will need to demonstrate slow but steady progress on the economy and to claim credit even when it is not necessarily due to them. Resolving "Buy America" provisions in U.S. legislation would win the Conservatives some domestic political points, but failure to do would probably not hurt them measurably. After an almost invisible role in Copenhagen, the Conservatives will still want to portray themselves as taking some pro-active steps on the environment to counteract public impressions that Canada is merely following a U.S. lead (however true this may be). For the present, the Conservatives will move toward as graceful as possible a withdrawal of Canadian Forces from Afghanistan by the end of 2011 as mandated under a Parliamentary motion. However, they still face some specific decisions soon about other future assistance there. Winning a Parliamentary majority in a new federal election and/or significant changes on the ground in Afghanistan could arguably enable the Conservatives to change course. End Summary.

Sitting pretty, but not pretty enough

[¶2.](#) (C/NF) In February 2010, Prime Minister Stephen Harper will complete his fourth year as Canada's head of government, despite the continued minority status of the Conservative Party of Canada in the House of Commons (145 members to the Official Opposition Liberal Party's 77 members in the 308 seat chamber). His party remains ahead in the polls - although still somewhat below the 40 pct national support that could arguably translate into a majority in a federal election. His own approval ratings are nearly double those of Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff. As was true for all of 2009, the Conservatives will spend 2010 waiting for an election, whether one that they trigger themselves (as in 2008) or one that results from losing a vote of no confidence in the House of Commons if the three opposition parties join forces against them.

Top priority: stay in power

[¶3.](#) (C/NF) The Conservatives increasingly see themselves as the 21st century's new "natural governing party" for Canada, a title the Liberals gave themselves in the previous century. However, in the federal elections in 2004, 2006, and 2008, the Conservatives under PM Harper failed to convince the public to give them a majority, although they won the largest number of seats in the House of Commons in the latter two elections and formed the government. Their greatest weaknesses have been in Quebec (where the Bloc Quebecois now has 48 of the province's 75 seats), in the major urban areas (Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver), and among immigrants and women, although they have made some in-roads in the past year in all these populations.

[¶4.](#) (C/NF) The Conservatives and most pundits had viewed a fall 2009 election as virtually a sure bet, especially after Liberal leader Ignatieff rhetorically declared to PM Harper at the end of the summer that "your time is up." Few predicted that the New Democratic Party would reverse a long-standing course of blanket opposition to the Conservatives by instead propping up the government, ostensibly to ensure two unemployment compensation-related bills that the NDP, along with the Conservatives, supported. Both had become law by the end of 2009, when Parliament recessed, giving the NDP no particular reason to support the government any further.

[¶5.](#) (C/NF) How long into 2010 the Conservatives can face off the opposition parties is a crapshoot; all four parties in Parliament must continually re-examine how well they might fare in a new election and craft their short-term tactics accordingly. The

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Conservatives arguably have the most to gain in a new election, given the many self-inflicted wounds suffered by the Liberals under

Ignatieff over the past year. The Conservatives nonetheless do not wish the public to blame them for a new and still unwelcome election. Liberal disarray and disappointing fundraising in the second half of 2009 leave the Liberal party in poor shape to face an election, which Ignatieff now admits that the public does not want. Nor have the Liberals hit upon a potentially winning issue. They and the NDP have tried to turn the treatment of Afghan detainees transferred by the Canadian Forces to Afghan authorities in 2006 and 2007 into a major embarrassment for the government. So far, the public isn't biting (51% remain unaware of the issue, according to a recent poll), and it is far from clear that there is much political utility for any of the opposition parties in making a major push to continue this probe in 2010.

¶6. (C/NF) The December 30 temporary suspension ("prorogation") of Parliament at PM Harper's request will give the Conservatives some political peace until March - notably, during the publicity-friendly 2010 Winter Olympics -- but has also further alienated the opposition parties and potentially raised the likelihood that they will revolt together against him over the 2010 budget in March. If so, this could lead to another federal election just before the G-8 and G-20 Summits in June (and Queen Elizabeth's visit in June and July). The Conservatives and the Liberals in particular will be carefully watching the polls in the coming months as they attempt to guess the relative advantages of a spring versus fall 2010 election. If neither timing appears inherently desirable to either, the Conservatives could conceivably coast in office until 2011.

Second priority: Re-grow the economy

¶7. (C/NF) The Conservatives have touted their careful pre- and post-recession stewardship of the economy as the main reason Canada was less battered by the global recession than their G-8 partners as well as other key economies. The jury is still somewhat out on whether long-standing monetary and fiscal policies were the main factors, or whether Canada's huge resource base and openness to international trade were not at least as much factors; our view is that both elements were part of the serendipitous mix. The Conservatives have in any event pretty much succeeded in convincing the public that they are more trustworthy on this issue than the Liberals would be (no one even bothers to contemplate what the NDP or Bloc might have done) - but they know they need to do more in 2010. ¶8. (C/NF) The 2010 budget, which the government must present to Parliament by March, will be the next indicator of what the Conservatives plan to do, especially given growing public anxiety about the sizeable (by Canadian standards) deficits projected not only in 2010 but at least through 2014. While the Conservative mantra of tax cutting sounded good to voters (if not to all economists) in 2006 and 2008, now it is more likely to scare the public. Spending cuts are the inevitable alternative, but the Conservatives cannot yet risk any sizeable reductions, at least until the economy takes off again. The budget - which is a confidence vote -- likely will have to include something for everyone and give the Liberals, Bloc, and possibly even the NDP something that they can vote for, or at least not oppose.

¶9. (C/NF) The Conservatives do not appear to have any bold measures up their sleeves to improve the economy, but appear content to wait for more results from their uncharacteristic stimulus packages and for a rising global economy - especially in the U.S. - to lift all boats.

Third priority: Resolve "Buy America"

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¶10. (C/NF) PM Harper has raised Canadian concerns over "Buy America" provisions in the American Reconstruction and Recovery Act (ARRA) so often with President Obama that it has become somewhat of a private joke. Any success on this issue from the ongoing bilateral negotiations will be political gold for the Conservatives, and also potentially a win/win for federal/provincial relations. The public -- but not the business community -- has largely lost track of the dispute, however, so even a failure in the talks might hurt the Conservatives less than would have been likely only a few months ago. None of the opposition parties has any better plan on how to reverse any U.S. inclinations on protectionism.

Fourth priority: Do something on climate change

¶11. (C/NF) PM Harper somewhat grudgingly went to Copenhagen for the UN Summit on climate change, but only after President Obama announced that he would attend. PM Harper's participation was virtually invisible to the Canadian public, and there was considerable negative coverage of his failure to play a more

prominent role - or even to sit in on the President's key meetings with world leaders. Environment Minister Jim Prentice was sent out to do the media scrums and to insist that Canada was a helpful participant and would work closely with the U.S. on a continental strategy on climate change. Now he must come up with some proposals that make Canada not seem merely to be going slavishly along with whatever its American "big brother" decides to do - which will not be easy. At the same time, a substantial proportion of the Canadian public and industry (as in many resource-rich industrialized countries) are opposed to Harper taking a leading role and are even opposed to him following any likely leads set by the Obama Administration. In that respect, given Canada's role as a major petroleum and natural gas producer, he will have an even more difficult political balancing act than will the U.S. or the Europeans. No big, sexy initiatives are likely from the Conservatives, however. Luckily for the government, the Liberals also do not have any great ideas up their sleeves, having especially been burned in previous Liberal leader Stephane Dion's "carbon tax" campaign platform in 2008.

¶12. (C/NF) Regional differences - notably among the oil/gas rich provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, the industrial province of Ontario, and the hydro-blessed province of Quebec - will complicate the federal government's ability to come up with a climate change policy that will please or at least satisfy all major constituencies.

Fifth priority: Get out of Afghanistan as gracefully as possible

¶13. (C/NF) PM Harper has insisted over and over that, in accordance with the bipartisan March 2008 House of Commons motion extending Canada's military presence in Afghanistan only through 2011, the Canadian Forces will indeed pull out NLT December 2011, and planning is underway on how to do so. Diminishing public support for the mission, a sense that Canada had done more than its share, and unspoken relief that the U.S. surge will let Canada off the hook all argue against any Canadian political leader rethinking Canada's strategy, at least for now. Absent a federal election in which the Conservatives win an actual majority, a significant and positive change in the conditions on the ground in Afghanistan, and/or a formal U.S./NATO request for Canada to remain post-2011 in some military capacity, the likelihood at present is that Canada will withdraw on schedule, as gracefully as possible. The government has been deliberately vague on post-2011 plans, apart from pledging -- without specifics -- a robust "civilian, developmental, and humanitarian" role, and will have to come up with an ambitious plan sometime in 2010. Some Conservatives as well as defense officials and media commentaries have already begun to express concern that the Canadian military pullout will diminish whatever special attention and consideration Canada has received from the U.S. and NATO as a result of its sacrifices in Kandahar.

JACOBSON

=====CABLE ENDS=====